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Gerardo Hernandez

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
NORTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

GERARDO HERNANDEZ,

Plaintiff,

vs.

BAY AREA OIL SUPPLY, INC. dba
MILLBRAE 76; PETROLEUM
INVESTMENTS, LLC;

Defendants.

) No.

) **COMPLAINT ASSERTING DENIAL OF**
) **RIGHT OF ACCESS UNDER THE**
) **AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT**
) **FOR INJUNCTIVE RELIEF,**
) **DECLARATORY RELIEF, DAMAGES,**
) **ATTORNEYS' FEES AND COSTS (ADA**

I. SUMMARY

1. This is a civil rights action by plaintiff GERARDO HERNANDEZ ("Plaintiff") for discrimination at the building, structure, facility, complex, property, land, development, and/or surrounding business complex known as:

Millbrae 76
5 El Camino Real
Millbrae, California 94030
(hereafter "the Facility")

2. Plaintiff seeks damages, injunctive and declaratory relief, attorney fees and costs, against BAY AREA OIL SUPPLY, INC. dba MILLBRAE 76 and PETROLEUM

1 INVESTMENTS, LLC (hereinafter collectively referred to as “Defendants”), pursuant to Title
2 III of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. §§ 12101 et seq.) (“ADA”) and
3 related California statutes.

4 **II. JURISDICTION**

5 3. This Court has original jurisdiction under 28 U.S.C. §§ 1331 and 1343 for ADA
6 claims.

7 4. Supplemental jurisdiction for claims brought under parallel California law –
8 arising from the same nucleus of operative facts – is predicated on 28 U.S.C. § 1367.

9 5. Plaintiff’s claims are authorized by 28 U.S.C. §§ 2201 and 2202.

10 **III. VENUE**

11 6. All actions complained of herein take place within the jurisdiction of the United
12 States District Court, Northern District of California, and venue is invoked pursuant to 28
13 U.S.C. § 1391(b), (c).

14 **IV. PARTIES**

15 7. Defendants own, operate, and/or lease the Facility, and consist of a person (or
16 persons), firm, and/or corporation.

17 8. Plaintiff is substantially limited in his ability to walk, and must use a wheelchair
18 for mobility. Consequently, Plaintiff is “physically disabled,” as defined by all applicable
19 California and United States laws, and a member of the public whose rights are protected by
20 these laws.

21 **V. FACTS**

22 9. The Facility includes a gas station and convenience store which is open to the
23 public, intended for non-residential use, and its operation affects commerce. The Facility is
24 therefore a public accommodation as defined by applicable state and federal laws.

25 10. Plaintiff lives less than twenty miles from the Facility and visited the Facility on
26 or about January 6, 2022 to purchase gasoline for his vehicle. During his visit to the Facility,
27 Plaintiff personally encountered barriers (both physical and intangible) that interfered with, if
28 not outright denied, Plaintiff’s ability to use and enjoy the goods, services, privileges and

1 accommodations offered at the Facility. These barriers include, but are not necessarily limited
2 to, the following:

3 a) Defendants have a policy, practice, or procedure whereby their staff
4 routinely park vehicles that are waiting to be serviced or picked up in or
5 obstructing the designated accessible parking stall and access aisle, so
6 the designated accessible parking at the Facility is not made available
7 for customer use. Plaintiff needed to go into the Facility to pay for gas
8 during his visit, and was not able to park in the designated accessible
9 parking because it was obstructed by a parked vehicle that did not
10 display a designated accessible parking permit. Through subsequent
11 investigation, Plaintiff has confirmed that the vehicles routinely parked
12 in the designated accessible parking are not parked temporarily by
13 customers of the Facility's store or gas station, but rather stored there by
14 Facility staff.

15 b) Defendants fail to provide a properly configured or identified accessible
16 route from the fuel pumps to the Facility entrance, and do not offer a
17 meaningful alternative accommodation to assist disabled customers who
18 wish to enter the store to pay for fuel or purchase items. Because he was
19 unable to park in the designated accessible parking, Plaintiff had to park
20 at the gas pump before going into the store to pay. The route of travel
21 was excessively sloped and uneven, which made it difficult for him to
22 traverse in his wheelchair.

23 11. There may exist other barriers at the Facility which relate to Plaintiff's
24 disabilities, and he will seek to amend this Complaint once such additional barriers are
25 identified as it is Plaintiff's intention to have all barriers which exist at the Facility and relate to
26 his disabilities removed to afford him full and equal access.

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1 12. Plaintiff was, and continues to be, deterred from visiting the Facility because
2 Plaintiff knows that the Facility's goods, services, facilities, privileges, advantages, and
3 accommodations were and are unavailable to Plaintiff due to Plaintiff's physical disabilities.
4 Plaintiff enjoys the goods and services offered at the Facility, and will return to the Facility
5 once the barriers are removed.

6 13. Defendants knew, or should have known, that these elements and areas of the
7 Facility were inaccessible, violate state and federal law, and interfere with (or deny) access to
8 the physically disabled. Moreover, Defendants have the financial resources to remove these
9 barriers from the Facility (without much difficulty or expense), and make the Facility
10 accessible to the physically disabled. To date, however, Defendants refuse to either remove
11 those barriers or seek an unreasonable hardship exemption to excuse non-compliance.

12 14. At all relevant times, Defendants have possessed and enjoyed sufficient control
13 and authority to modify the Facility to remove impediments to wheelchair access and to
14 comply with the 1991 ADA Accessibility Guidelines and/or the 2010 ADA Standards for
15 Accessible Design. Defendants have not removed such impediments and have not modified the
16 Facility to conform to accessibility standards. Defendants have intentionally maintained the
17 Facility in its current condition and have intentionally refrained from altering the Facility so
18 that it complies with the accessibility standards.

19 15. Plaintiff further alleges that the (continued) presence of barriers at the Facility is
20 so obvious as to establish Defendants' discriminatory intent. On information and belief,
21 Plaintiff avers that evidence of this discriminatory intent includes Defendants' refusal to adhere
22 to relevant building standards; disregard for the building plans and permits issued for the
23 Facility; conscientious decision to maintain the architectural layout (as it currently exists) at the
24 Facility; decision not to remove barriers from the Facility; and allowance that Defendants'
25 property continues to exist in its non-compliant state. Plaintiff further alleges, on information
26 and belief, that the Facility is not in the midst of a remodel, and that the barriers present at the
27 Facility are not isolated or temporary interruptions in access due to maintenance or repairs.

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VI. FIRST CLAIM

Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990

Denial of “Full and Equal” Enjoyment and Use

16. Plaintiff re-pleads and incorporates by reference the allegations contained in each of the foregoing paragraphs, and incorporates them herein as if separately re-pled.

17. Title III of the ADA holds as a “general rule” that no individual shall be discriminated against on the basis of disability in the full and equal enjoyment (or use) of goods, services, facilities, privileges, and accommodations offered by any person who owns, operates, or leases a place of public accommodation. 42 U.S.C. § 12182(a).

18. Defendants discriminated against Plaintiff by denying Plaintiff “full and equal enjoyment” and use of the goods, services, facilities, privileges and accommodations of the Facility during each visit and each incident of deterrence.

Failure to Remove Architectural Barriers in an Existing Facility

19. The ADA specifically prohibits failing to remove architectural barriers, which are structural in nature, in existing facilities where such removal is readily achievable. 42 U.S.C. § 12182(b)(2)(A)(iv).

20. When an entity can demonstrate that removal of a barrier is not readily achievable, a failure to make goods, services, facilities, or accommodations available through alternative methods is also specifically prohibited if these methods are readily achievable. *Id.* § 12182(b)(2)(A)(v).

21. Here, Plaintiff alleges that Defendants can easily remove the architectural barriers at the Facility without much difficulty or expense, that the cost of removing the architectural barriers does not exceed the benefits under the particular circumstances, and that Defendants violated the ADA by failing to remove those barriers, when it was readily achievable to do so.

22. In the alternative, if it was not “readily achievable” for Defendants to remove the Facility’s barriers, then Defendants violated the ADA by failing to make the required services available through alternative methods, which are readily achievable.

Failure to Design and Construct an Accessible Facility

23. Plaintiff alleges on information and belief that the Facility was designed and constructed (or both) after January 26, 1993 – independently triggering access requirements under Title III of the ADA.

24. The ADA also prohibits designing and constructing facilities for first occupancy after January 26, 1993, that aren't readily accessible to, and usable by, individuals with disabilities when it was structurally practicable to do so. 42 U.S.C. § 12183(a)(1).

25. Here, Defendants violated the ADA by designing and constructing (or both) the Facility in a manner that was not readily accessible to the physically disabled public – including Plaintiff – when it was structurally practical to do so.¹

Failure to Make an Altered Facility Accessible

26. Plaintiff alleges on information and belief that the Facility was modified after January 26, 1993, independently triggering access requirements under the ADA.

27. The ADA also requires that facilities altered in a manner that affects (or could affect) its usability must be made readily accessible to individuals with disabilities to the maximum extent feasible. 42 U.S.C. § 12183(a)(2). Altering an area that contains a facility's primary function also requires making the paths of travel, bathrooms, telephones, and drinking fountains serving that area accessible to the maximum extent feasible. *Id.*

28. Here, Defendants altered the Facility in a manner that violated the ADA and was not readily accessible to the physically disabled public – including Plaintiff – to the maximum extent feasible.

Failure to Modify Existing Policies and Procedures

29. The ADA also requires reasonable modifications in policies, practices, or procedures, when necessary to afford such goods, services, facilities, or accommodations to individuals with disabilities, unless the entity can demonstrate that making such modifications would fundamentally alter their nature. 42 U.S.C. § 12182(b)(2)(A)(ii).

¹ Nothing within this Complaint should be construed as an allegation that Plaintiff is bringing this action as a private attorney general under either state or federal statutes.

IX. PRAYER FOR RELIEF

WHEREFORE, Plaintiff prays judgment against Defendants, and each of them, for:

1. Injunctive relief, preventive relief, or any other relief the Court deems proper.
2. Statutory minimum damages under section 52(a) of the California Civil Code according to proof.
3. Declaratory relief finding that Defendants violated the ADA for the purposes of Unruh Act damages.
4. Attorneys' fees, litigation expenses, and costs of suit.²
5. Interest at the legal rate from the date of the filing of this action.
6. For such other and further relief as the Court deems proper.

Dated: 4/13/2023

MOORE LAW FIRM, P.C.

/s/ Tanya E. Moore

Tanya E. Moore
Attorney for Plaintiff
Gerardo Hernandez

² This includes attorneys' fees under California Code of Civil Procedure § 1021.5.

VERIFICATION

I, GERARDO HERNANDEZ, am the plaintiff in the above-entitled action. I have read the foregoing Complaint and know the contents thereof. The same is true of my own knowledge, except as to those matters which are therein alleged on information and belief, and as to those matters, I believe them to be true.

I verify under penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true and correct.

Dated: 4/13/2023

/s/ Gerardo Hernandez

Gerardo Hernandez

I attest that the original signature of the person whose electronic signature is shown above is maintained by me, and that his concurrence in the filing of this document and attribution of his signature was obtained.

/s/ Tanya E. Moore

Tanya E. Moore

Attorney for Plaintiff,

GERARDO HERNANDEZ